

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews the literature related to this study. It discusses the definition of ESP, the role of needs analysis in an ESP programme, the purpose and parameters of needs analysis, procedures for carrying out needs analysis, the various approaches and roles of needs analysis in course design including the formulation of course objectives, selection of syllabus content and evaluation. This chapter also presents various needs analysis studies that have been carried out in other countries and in Malaysia.

2.2 Definition of English for Specific Purposes (ESP)

There are various perceptions of ESP as given by Schleppegrel (1991), Brumfit (1980), Munby (1978), Mackay and Mountford (1978), and Hutchinson and Waters (1987). It can generally be said that ESP programmes cater to different needs of learners based on their fields of study. For example, an ESP programme for business students is different from an ESP programme for Engineering students. How specific an ESP course should be, varies according to the needs of the learners (Schleppegrel, 1991). Sometimes the language skills needed by the participants in an ESP course are restricted, like a taxi driver who learns English to specifically communicate with his passengers. Therefore, the taxi driver most probably is only interested to learn how to

greet his passengers, how to request for the taxi fare and some other basic conversational skills. Sometimes, the English skills that are needed by learners of an English programme require inclusion of a broader set of cross-cultural skills. For example, hotel workers who need English will need to know how to answer enquiries and handle complaints, and how to resolve problems of guests who come from a variety of backgrounds. Sometimes the language skills needed are not restricted, but the context of learning is quite specific, as in the case of business managers who need to be able to communicate in English within an international business context.

An ESP course is directly concerned with the purpose for which learners need English, a purpose that is usually expressed in functional terms. ESP thus fits firmly within the general movement towards 'communicative' teaching of the last two decades ago (Brumfit, 1980). Munby (1978) states that ESP courses are those where the syllabus and materials are determined in all essentials by the prior analysis of the communication needs of the learner.

According to Mackay and Mountford (1978), ESP has two important characteristics that profoundly influence the materials and classroom activities in an ESP class. The two characteristics are the close association of special purpose language teaching with adult learners, or, at least, learners at the post-secondary level of general education; and secondly, the important auxiliary role that the English language is called upon to play in such cases. They also state that ESP implies a special aim. This aim may determine the precise area of language required, skills needed and the range of functions to which language is to be put.

An ESP programme, however, should not be misunderstood as consisting of limited language of words and expressions selected from the whole language. According to Hutchinson and Waters (1987), what distinguishes ESP from General English is not the existence of a need as such, but rather an awareness of the need of a target situation. If learners, sponsors and instructors know why the learners need English, that awareness will have an influence on what will be acceptable as reasonable content in the language course.

Thus, according to the definitions above, the TPS modules offered in BMI fit the definitions of an ESP course given by Schleppegrel (1991), and Mackay and Mountford (1978), as the content is specific according to the needs of the learners, who are all adult Engineering students. However, the current TPS module is lacking because no needs analysis has been conducted prior to the commencement of the module; and this is an essential part of an ESP course. Hence, this present study is carried out in order to identify the needs of the learners of the TPS modules at BMI.

2.3 Needs Analysis and ESP

Conducting a needs analysis is an important part of an ESP programme. According to Orr (1998), ESP is driven by the specific learning needs of the language learner. ESP needs analysis lays a solid foundation for a stable ESP programme. An ESP analysis should be able to establish learning targets at the entry levels. Establishing learning targets helps to specify the target skills and language required to function successfully in target English situations, as clear objectives make programme

design much easier. Identifying the language targets toward which students must aim may comprise the largest percent of needs analysis, but it should consist of more than just identifying the target needs of the learners. It should also be able to first identify where the students stand, and then to evaluate the gap between the students' current state and the target to be achieved, before necessary instruction can be determined.

According to Brindley (1989), there are two orientations to needs analysis. The first of these is 'narrow' or 'product-oriented' interpretation of needs, whereby learners' needs are seen solely in terms of the language they will have to use in a particular communication situation. The second interpretation of needs is called 'broad' or 'process-oriented' interpretation where needs is primarily seen in terms of the needs of the learner as an individual in the learning situation. This orientation also takes into account a multiplicity of affective and cognitive variables which affect learning, such as learners' attitude, motivation, awareness, personality, wants, expectations and learning styles.

This study follows the second orientation to needs analysis outlined by Brindley (1989) in which apart from the language needs, this study also looks into the learners' preferred learning environment such as the kinds of materials, handouts/ notes, teaching aids, assessments and activities that the learners perceive as suitable for them.

2.4 Defining the Parameters of 'Needs'

Before a needs analysis study can be carried out, it is important to define the parameters of 'needs'. Generally, needs analysis should ask questions about students' needs and wants, the expectations of the institution and the features of the actual teaching situation (Dudley-Evans and St. John, 1998). However, in defining 'needs', the concept of a 'need' is still ambiguous, especially when it is used in the teaching of languages. Ek and Trim (1984) point out these in defining 'needs':

- i. A need does not exist independent of a person. It is people who build their own images of their needs on the basis of data relating to themselves and their environment, which give them an awareness of a certain lack.
- ii. A need can be satisfied only by recourse to an element external to the person.

Hutchinson and Waters (1987) divide 'needs' into two categories, namely, 'target needs', which is what the learner needs to do in the target situation, and secondly, 'learning needs', which is what the learner needs to do in order to learn. The target situation can be viewed in terms of necessities, lacks and wants. 'Necessities' is the type of need determined by the demand of the target situation, that is, what the learner has to know in order to function effectively in the target situation. 'Lacks' is the gap between the target proficiency and the existing proficiency of the learners, while 'wants' is the learners' view as to what their needs are. 'Learning needs' refer to

knowing the conditions of the learning situation that can facilitate an ESP learning situation.

Other parameters along which 'needs' can be distinguished are the 'goal-oriented' view of 'needs' and the 'process-oriented' concept of 'needs', which promote a communicative approach to the teaching of ESP (Widdowson, 1981). The goal-oriented approach uses the data as a determinant of course content in which an area of language is selected prior to the course and expressly taught. It also assumes that the completion of a course of instruction marks the completion of learning, and that all that is left for the student to do is to apply this ready-made knowledge in a real situation like in a work place. In contrast, the process-oriented approach uses language data as a means of activating learning strategies, and it assumes that learning will continue beyond the completion of instruction, since the aim of such instruction is to develop a capacity to learn.

Brindley (1989) mentions that the definitions of needs differ according to these three views - the 'language proficiency' view of needs, the 'psychological-humanistic' view and the 'specific purposes' view. The proponents of the first view interpret 'needs' as the gap between the current and the desired 'general' proficiency level, and, hence, tend to stress the importance of language proficiency as a criterion for grouping learners. The 'Psychological-humanistic' perspective emphasises the learners' affective and psychological needs that they see as a gap between a current and a desired psychological state. The third view of 'needs' is similar to the 'goal-oriented' definition proposed by Widdowson (1981), which emphasizes what the learner needs

to do with the language once he has learned it. This view focuses on the necessity to align course content with the learners' occupational or academic goals.

This study seeks to identify the 'wants' and 'learning needs' of the learners as defined by Hutchinson and Waters (1987), in which the aim is to identify the learners' view as to what their needs are and to know the conditions of the learning situation that can facilitate ESP learning situation.

2.5 The Purpose of Needs Analysis in ESP

Needs analysis is a crucial part of an ESP course as it serves many purposes. According to Mackay and Mountford (1978), the purpose of needs assessment is fourfold. First, the instructor must become acquainted with the sponsoring institution and the requirements of the course. Second, the needs assessment identifies how learners will use English in their technical fields. Third, the needs assessment gives the instructor initial insights about the prospective students' current level of performance in English. Fourth, the needs assessment provides an opportunity to collect samples of authentic texts, spoken and written, which are used by the students in their jobs or professions.

Needs analysis is useful as it enables the individuals and institutions to define their learning objectives more clearly. Identifying language needs is necessary in order to become aware of the learning condition of individuals or groups, and to align these with their physical, intellectual and emotional possibilities, as well as to devise

learning materials which will approach the real use made of the language taught; thus, to define pedagogical objectives through negotiation with the learners (Ek and Trim, 1984).

Mackay (1978) states that language instructors involved in planning courses for given groups of learners for specific purposes are responsible for determining accurately what the specific purposes are. This is to enable the instructor to translate the needs into linguistic and pedagogic terms in order to produce and teach an effective course.

However according to Richterich and Chancerel (1977), the identification of needs ought not to be a preliminary step in the construction of systems since it ought to be possible for it to take place at any time, at different levels and with variable degrees of precision and clearness. It should be an integral part of the learning systems themselves, to be used by the learner and the institutions to appreciate certain factors and data capable of influencing either the point at which the learning starts or the learning itself. It also enables both the learner and the institutions to define the roles of each party in making decisions about the choice of objectives, methods of assessment and curricula in conformity with the available resources.

According to Richterich cited in Trim (1980), 'needs analysis' comes to mean the whole cluster of techniques which lead to an understanding of the parameters of the learning situations: - ego, fellow learners, instructor(s), administrators, course-writers, producers, social agencies and social dynamics, - which are relevant factors in addition

to the original predicted communication behaviour. Since none of these are constant, analysis becomes a central aspect of course management and the most important aspect of the long climb to that self-reliance and autonomy which eventually will allow the learner to take charge of his own learning.

Richetrich and Chancerel (1977) further elaborate that the outcome of the identification of needs will thus be the product of a certain amount of information collected at different levels and time, the amount and the manner of collecting it depending, on the one hand, on requirements and the desire to take account of them felt by individuals, establishments and institutions and, on the other hand, on the means and instruments available. Thus, depending on the circumstances, the learner and the establishment will organize their own methods of identification on the basis of information that they deem important. In some cases a vague, general overall inquiry will be sufficient while in other analyses, surveys and detailed samplings will be necessary.

When needs are clear, learning aims can be defined in terms of the specific purposes to which the language will be put, whether it be reading scientific papers or communicating with technicians on an oil rig (Mackay and Mountford, 1978). The result is that almost immediately, teaching can be seen to be effective in that the learner begins to demonstrate communicative ability in the required area.

Every one of the specialized needs requires detailed studies of restricted languages and special registers from a large sample of the language used by the particular persons concerned in a field like Engineering before appropriate teaching materials can be developed (Halliday, McIntosh and Stevens as cited in Widdowson 1981). An ESP course planner should first observe, record and analyze the English used in a target situation before a teaching course can be devised with confidence and certainty.

In conclusion, needs analysis will be able to identify how learners will use English in their technical fields. The purpose of needs analysis is also to give the instructor insights about the students' level of performance in English and to understand the parameters of the learning situations. The analysis should be done continuously at different levels and time.

However, in my study, needs analysis is carried out at the point when the learners are in their final semester, as it is believed that they should be able to identify their difficulties in the English language skills and the types of language skills important for them. They are also at a position to be able to assess the relevance of the institution's current English programme in terms of the teaching and learning materials, handouts or notes, usage of teaching aids, assessments and classroom activities.

2.6 Procedures for Needs Analysis

There are various methods that can be employed in order to obtain data from a needs analysis study. Trimby (1979) cited in Brindley (1989) gives a detailed list of methods of data collection for a needs analysis study:

- i. standardised forms
- ii. language proficiency tests
- iii. observation
- iv. oral surveys
- v. group discussions
- vi. written questionnaires
- vii. intensive language analysis in target communication situation
- viii. language proficiency tests
- ix. counselling/interviews

West (1994) mentions that there are many ways to carry out a needs analysis ranging from major 'scientific' surveys to informal tools put together by an individual instructor for and with his/her class. Schutz and Derwing cited in West (1994) mention that any needs analysis study may employ more than one method, although the scope and objectives of the inquiry will largely determine the nature of the investigation, and hence the choice of the most appropriate investigatory instrument. There are ten methods of collecting data for needs analysis which are listed as follows:

- i. pre-course placement/ diagnostic
- ii. entry tests on arrival
- iii. self placement/ diagnostic tests
- iv. observation of classes
- v. surveys based on questionnaires
- vi. structured interviews
- vii. learner diaries
- viii. case studies
- ix. final evaluation/feedback
- x. previous research

In terms of when the needs analysis should be carried out, West (1994) mentions that it can be carried out before, at the start or during the training course. Needs analysis that is carried out before the beginning of the course will give ample time to the course designer to prepare a syllabus and select or develop appropriate training materials. It can also be done when trainers arrive to register for a course. The disadvantage of this approach is that the trainer or the course designer has little time to prepare a detailed course outline. It is possible to obtain information that is full, relevant and accurate, but its fullness, relevance and accuracy is short lived because the needs may change once the learners have started learning the course. A process of on-going needs re-analysis, during the course, is therefore required in response to the changing perceptions, so that both learner and instructor can identify new or short-term priorities.

In answering the question of who should decide what the language needs are, West (1994) answers that there are three principal parties involved- instructor-perceived needs, student-perceived needs and company-perceived needs. Ideally these three interact in a cooperative way although each party may also impose constraints. There are also various informants or sources for needs analysis, notably former students, those already working in the target situation and specialist/ native-speaker informants. In order for the identification of needs to be reliable, it is important to have the maximum number of sources of information.

For this study, the data are obtained through the written questionnaires, which are given out to the students, language instructors and Engineering instructors. The needs analysis of this study is carried out during the course as the students are currently in their final semester of the TPS module.

2.7 Approaches to Needs Analysis

ESP is an approach that is based on learners' needs. It is the identification of learners' needs that distinguishes an ESP course from other English language courses. Hutchinson and Waters (1987) state that ESP must be seen as an approach not as a product. They further elaborate that 'ESP is not a particular kind of language or methodology, nor does it consist of a particular type of teaching material' (Hutchinson and Waters, 1987:19). There are various approaches in identifying learners' needs which include 'The Threshold Level', 'Target Situation Analysis', 'Strategy Analysis' and 'Means Analysis'. These are explained in the following sub-sections:

2.7.1 The Threshold Level

The threshold level is defined as the minimal level of language ability that the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learner will need to acquire in order to be able to function in general everyday communication situations. According to Ek (1976), the aim of learning is always to enable the learner to do something, which he has not been able to do at the beginning of the learning process. Hence, the learning-objectives have to be geared towards learners' needs. This means that before defining an

objective, the group of learners to be catered for must first be defined. In order to define the language learning-objective for a target-group, the situations in which they will need the foreign language will have to be specified first. Specifying a situation means stating the roles a language-user has to play, the settings in which he will have to play these roles, and the topics he will have to deal with.

A major contribution of the Threshold Level's functional/notional syllabus produced by the Council of Europe is the identification of the target learner and the types of language contacts in which learners are most likely to engage in. The Threshold Level operates on the rationale of the transfer potential of linguistic ability. This means that once the learner has been successfully prepared for certain language contacts, he will also find it possible to cope adequately in other language situations.

2.7.2 Target Situation Analysis

According to Chambers (1980:29), 'Target Situation Analysis is an approach to needs analysis devoted to establishing the learners' language requirements in the occupational or academic situation they are being prepared for'. The most well known approach to Target Situation Analysis is the one devised by Munby (1978) for the British Council. The basis of Munby's model is a two-part instrument consisting of a communicative needs processor, which is then converted into a communicative competence specification. The syllabus specification is derived from 'adequate profiles of communication needs' (Munby 1978:3).

The 'Communication Needs Processor' takes account of the variables that affect communication needs by organising them as parameters in a dynamic relationship to each other. The parameters are of two kinds, one set of constraints (*a posteriori*) that depend upon input from another set of constraints (*a priori*) before they can become operational. The *a priori* parameters are purposive domain, setting, interaction and instrumentality. The *a posteriori* parameters are dialect, target level, communicative event, and communicative key.

The parameters are further elaborated as follows. The purposive domain refers to the type of ESP involved and then specifies the occupational or educational purpose for which the target language is required. The setting deals with features of both physical and psychosocial setting. Interaction is the variable where one identifies those with whom the participant has to communicate in the target language, and predicts the relationships that may be expected to obtain between him and his interlocutors. Instrumentality is concerned with identifying constraints on the input in terms of the medium, mode, and channel of communication. Next, one has to specify whether British or American English is the more appropriate English dialect for the participant to produce or understand. The target level is the target level of command that will further guide the processing of the model. The communicative event is concerned with what the participant has to do, either productively or receptively. The communicative key is concerned with how (in the sense of manner) one does the activities comprising an event (the what one does). After having processed the eight parameters of the Communication Needs Processor - purposive domain, setting, interaction, instrumentality, dialect, target level, communicative event and

communicative key - a profile, that is the Communication Needs Profile, has been systematically arrived at.

The Communication Needs Profile is used to decide what particular language skills and functions the learners need to master in order to fulfil all the requirements in the variables. It can, therefore, produce an extremely detailed and comprehensive target syllabus based on a learner's profile of communication needs. It does not claim to produce an actual teaching/learning syllabus indicating how learners progress towards their target.

The Communication Needs Profile consists of a range of questions about key communication variables (topic, participants, medium etc.), which can be used to identify the target language needs of any group of learners. However, by taking the analysis of target needs to its logical conclusion, it shows the sterility of a language-centred approach to needs analysis. It illustrates, in effect, not how much could be learnt from a 'scientific' needs analysis, but rather how little (Hutchinson and Waters, 1987).

According to Hawkey (1980), the Munby needs analysis model is a tool for the course designer rather than the learner. It presupposes a language-training situation with reasonably specific occupational or educational objectives involving a reasonably homogeneous learner group. Given this, it should enable the course designer to achieve two things, namely, to produce

- i. a detailed profile of what the learner needs to be able to do in English in the occupation or studies for which he is being trained, and
- ii. a specification of the language skills, functions and forms required to carry out the communication described in the needs profile.

2.7.3 Strategy Analysis

This approach is an extension of needs analysis from 'what'- which is the syllabus content - into 'how'. The obvious focus of analysis is methodology. Learning strategies have been the major focus of analysis in this approach as there is a growing recognition that specification of the end products (the syllabus design component of the curriculum) must also be accompanied by specifications of methodology that is an indication on how to reach that end point (Nunan, 1988).

Related areas of relevance in a strategy analysis are preferences in terms of grouping size, extent of homework, learning in/out of class, learning styles, correction preferences, use of audio/visual sources, and methods of assessment.

2.7.4 Means Analysis

Means analysis looks at 'the environment in which a course will be run or the environment in which a project will take root, grow healthily and survive' (Dudley-Evans and St. John, 1998: 124). The two key factors considered here are the

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classroom culture and the management of infrastructure and culture. 'Means analysis' acknowledges that what works well in one situation may not work in another.

According to this approach, the course designer or instructor first identifies the relevant features of the situation (the 'ecosystem') and then sees how the positive features can be used to advantage, to accommodate what will conventionally be seen as constraints (West, 1994). Holliday (1984) cited in West (1994) identifies four principal steps in such a means analysis - (1) observing lessons, by taking random notes on all significant features; (2) using the notes to construct a report on the lesson to form the basis of discussion with the instructor; (3) reviewing all the original notes and drawing out significant features common to all observations; and (4) constructing a communicative device (chart, diagram, etc.), which expresses the findings. These principal steps then form the basis of realistic negotiation of the course between all interested parties in the light of available resources and options.

In short, the four approaches to needs analysis - 'The Threshold Level', 'Target Situation Analysis', 'Strategy Analysis' and 'Means Analysis'- have been discussed. This study is carried out based on two of these approaches, namely the 'Target Situation Analysis' and 'Strategy Analysis'. This is because this study seeks to identify the language content to be included in the syllabus and to identify the learners' preferences in terms of materials, assessments, teaching aids, handouts/ notes and activities.

2.8 Needs Analysis and Course Design

The data obtained through needs analysis is very useful in designing an ESP course. According to Hutchinson and Waters (1987), course design is the process by which the raw data about language learning is interpreted in order to produce an integrated series of teaching-learning experiences, of which the ultimate aim is to lead the learners to a particular state of knowledge. This entails the use of the theoretical and empirical information available to produce a syllabus; select, adapt or write materials in accordance with the syllabus; develop a methodology for teaching those materials; and to establish evaluation procedures by which progress towards the specified goals will be measured.

According to Mackay and Mountford (1978), the factors involved in designing English for Science and Technology courses, or any other ESP courses, can be classified under sociological, linguistic, psychological and pedagogic factors. Sociological factors take into account information about the kind of learner for whom the programme is to be developed and the identification of the actual situations in which the learner is required to use the language. This includes data relating to age and previous experience of the target language. Linguistic factors look into the selection of the linguistic content of the language to be used for particular purposes. This depends on an adequate and appropriate description of the language characteristic of that which the learner is required to handle. Psychological factors look into how language can be used as a communicative instrument from the learner's point of view. The learner should play the 'problem-solving' role as a participant in the interpretation

and composition of discourse. Pedagogic factors look into how to devise pedagogic procedures that will develop language skills that are being focused on or need to be focused on.

Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998: 145) outline the following parameters that need to be investigated in making decisions about course design:

1. Should the course be intensive or extensive?
2. Should the learners' performance be assessed or not?
3. Should the course deal with immediate needs or with delayed needs?
4. Should the role of the instructor be that of the provider of knowledge and activities, or should it be as a facilitator of activities arising from learners' expressed wants?
5. Should the course have a broad or narrow focus?
6. Should the course be pre-study or pre-experience or run parallel with that study or experience?
7. Should the material be common-core or specific to learners' study or work?
8. Should the group taking the course be homogeneous or should it be heterogeneous?
9. Should the course design be worked out by the language instructor after consultation with the learners and the institution, or should it be subject to a process of negotiation with the learners?

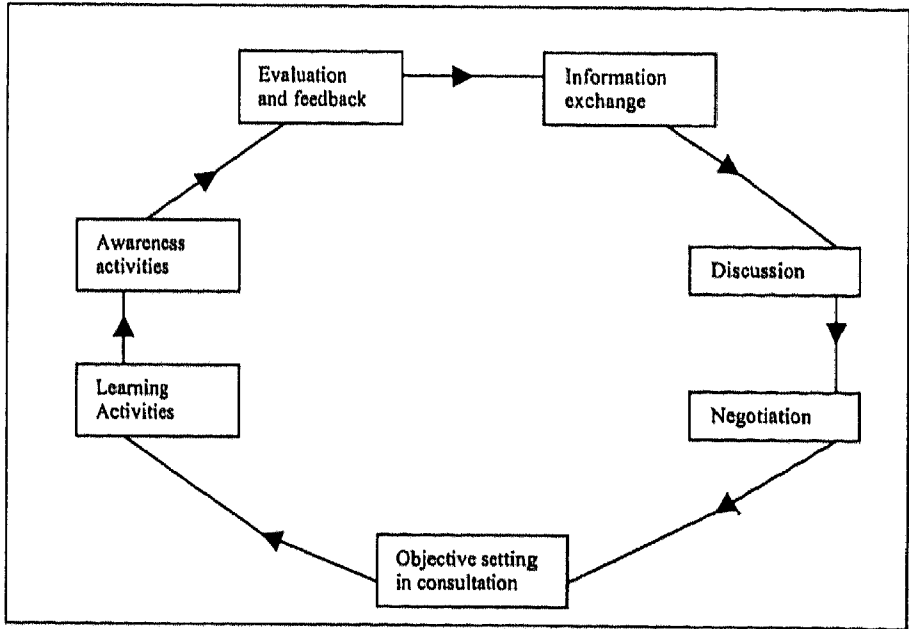
According to Altman and James (1980), an analysis of learners' needs is able to give answer on how best to break down language into units and sub-units as soon as any course or examination is constructed.

In view of what has been discussed, it can be concluded that the information obtained from the needs analysis study should be used as a basis in designing a course by taking into account the sociological, linguistic, psychological and pedagogic factors in order to determine the answers to the parameters outlined by Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998).

2.8.1 Needs Analysis and Formulation of Course Objectives

In designing an ESP course, the information from the needs analysis should be used in determining the objectives of the ESP course. The role of needs analysis in the course design of a learning-centred system is represented in Figure 2.1:

Figure 2.1
Cycle of needs analysis in a learning-centred system (Brindley, 1989: 77)



In this cycle, the objectives of the course will determine the language and awareness activities. Course evaluation and feedback provide for further changes in defining needs through a process of information exchange, discussion and negotiation to arrive at a new set of objectives.

Van Ek, quoted by Trim (1980: 58), points out that in order to be sufficiently specific, the definition of a learning objective should specify the following needs:

- i. the content of that which is to be learned;
- ii. the behaviour which the successful learner will be expected to be able to exhibit;
- iii. the circumstances in which the behaviour will have to be exhibited; and
- iv. the criteria of acceptable performance

Since the aim of the learning is first and foremost the ability to communicate verbally, an explicit definition of its objectives has to specify the nature of the language communication situations in which verbal behaviour will have to be exhibited, and what behaviour is to be considered adequate in each situation.

In short, course objectives that are derived from the needs analysis should be able to specify the course content and how the learners should practise the language content in a particular situation. The objectives should also state how to measure the competency of learners.

2.8.2 Needs Analysis and Selection of Syllabus Content

Once the course objectives have been identified, the next stage is to select the content of the syllabus. Munby cited in Widdowson (1981) contends that when the purpose for which the target language is required can be identified, the syllabus specification is directly derivable from the prior identification of the communication needs of that particular participant or participant stereotype.

Orr (1998) recommends that ESP content material be organized and presented in the following three phases, namely:

Phase 1: Transition and Review:

Phase 2: Listening/Speaking Instruction and Reading/Writing Instruction, and

Phase 3: Integrated Applications.

The first phase is to review the fundamental English language learning skills in listening, speaking, reading and writing skills, and content in areas where English for General Purposes and ESP overlap in order to equip students for hard-core ESP in the second and third phase. The second phase is to master the spoken and written ESP discourse. This phase is also known as the 'hard-core ESP'. The final phase is to integrate the four language skills in realistic or genuine target situations for which students have been preparing. For example, ESP instruction in this phase might include supplementary support for academic English activities, such as providing assistance with writing graduation theses or dissertations in English.

2.8.3 Needs Analysis and Course Evaluation

Needs analysis should not only be carried out at the beginning of a course. According to Brindley (1989), it should be an ongoing process, which can be carried out while the course is still in progress or at the end of the course where course objective can be evaluated to provide feedback on changing needs.

Brindley (1989) further elaborates that feedback can be obtained through group discussions, surveys, interviews, learning contacts and communication awareness activities, learning strategies, etc. He contends that 'if feedback and consultation are built into the learning cycle, a language activity can in itself become a kind of needs analysis which allows the instructor to perceive and provide for needs as they arise' (Brindley, 1989: 76).

Ongoing analysis is necessary since the learners' needs may change with a change in jobs, financial resources and with changes in needs as the ESP course progresses. As the learners undertake learning activities, they become more aware of what is involved in learning a language and become more conscious of their own resources. As a result, their needs will change and the cycle of information leads to further adjustments and re-evaluation of needs.

In short, needs analysis study should be an on-going process that can be done either at the beginning or during the course so that the content of an ESP course is relevant to the learners' needs.

2.9 Selected Foreign Studies on Needs Analysis

Several studies on needs analysis have been carried in other countries and the aim of most of the recent studies is to find out the needs of the students studying a particular English course. These studies are also concerned with the development of new ESP courses and the evaluation of current ESP courses.

One of such studies was a study conducted by Konig and Kraljevic (1999) at the Department of Economics and Department of Civil Engineering, University of Osijek, Croatia to gain insights into the students' opinions and wishes in relation to ESP learning needs. The methods used were both qualitative (class observation, tests and examinations, interviews) and quantitative (structured questionnaire). The results from the research showed that students of economics needed commercial correspondence, reading contracts and legal documents, writing reports, listening to meetings and lectures, as well as telephone conversations. They would also need English when delivering presentations, attending meetings as well as in negotiations and business travel. On the other hand, students of civil Engineering needed English for translation, reading specialist journals and books, letters and faxes, writing scientific papers and technical documentation, listening to lectures, meetings as well as negotiations. They assumed they would use English in presentations, at international seminars and when attending meetings.

Another needs analysis study on Engineering students was carried out by Basturkmen and Al-Huneidi (1996) in Kuwait University's College of Petroleum and Engineering. The objective was to create a basis for assessing the relevance of the institution's current English as a second language programme. The results showed that English language needs were fairly homogenous across the College and hardly varied between departments. The receptive skills of reading and listening were seen as significantly more important to students than the productive skills of speaking and writing. In terms of English language instruction, both faculty and teaching assistants felt that more English instructions should be given, which meant longer teaching hours for English.

Kriukova and Patyaeva (2002) conducted a needs analysis study as part of the tasks in developing a new foreign language course at the Nizhni Novgorod State Architectural and Civil Engineering University in 2002. A set of questionnaires was given to students and post-graduate students, and another set was given to the heads of university divisions. The results indicated that most of the respondents' needs in learning a foreign language were to be able to operate within a business environment in their future professional life - like doing negotiations and writing business correspondence on one hand, and reading texts in their specialized subject on the other. Based on the results, the researchers concluded that the new course should not be restricted to the teaching of business language only as there should be a sensible balance between general, business and specialized languages.

Kavaliauskiene and Uzpaliene (2003) conducted a needs analysis study at the Law University of Lithuania, Lithuania. The aims were to investigate the learners' needs, wants and lacks. The respondents were 22 to 25 year old students at the university. Two stages of needs analysis were carried out - one at the beginning of the ESP course and the other in the middle of the ESP course. The results showed that there were some differences in terms of the 'needs', 'want' and 'lacks' among students in the initial and middle of the course. Therefore, the researchers suggested that instructors conduct a thorough analysis of ongoing learners' needs, wants and lacks in order to adjust the ESP course syllabus to students' changing demands.

Buitkiene (2002) conducted the first needs analysis study at Vilnius Pedagogical University, Lithuania. The number of students involved in the study was 207 and the main instrument used was the questionnaire. The questionnaire was aimed at obtaining information on the learners' lacks, necessities, wants and learning strategies. One of the results showed that the most incomprehensible and the least known area for the students was reading and understanding their specialist texts. In terms of necessity, in the long term, the students wanted to use English for everyday communication, along with professional and study purposes. In terms of learning strategy, the students felt that they learnt best through conversations followed by reading books. The study also enabled Buitkiene (2002) to define areas of difficulty, which the students faced such as understanding professional texts, oral communication, writing and understanding native speakers.

2.10 Selected Studies on Needs Analysis in Malaysia

Several needs analysis studies have been conducted in a Malaysian context by Amreet Kaur (1990), Leong (1992), Gan Kwa (1996) and Chow (1996). The findings of these studies highlight various needs according to the environments in which the studies are carried out. This means that the language needs of the respondents are different, depending on the environment in which the language is used. Certain language functions that are deemed as important in one environment may not be significant in other environments. The findings support Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998: 126) claim that “the findings from a needs analysis are not absolute but relative and there is no single, unique set of needs.”

A study by Amreet Kaur (1990) looked into the present and future English language needs of the students studying a particular course. The students in this study were taking the Diploma in Planting Industry and Management course at the Mara Institute of Technology. The data for her study was obtained from the final semester students and from the employers who had, at some time or other in the recent past, taken in Diploma in Planting Industry and Management students for practical training. Each student underwent a structured interview, while the employers had questionnaires mailed to them. The study revealed that English was important for Diploma in Planting Industry and Management students and that speaking skills, in particular, required a great deal of emphasis. The study also showed that English language needs analysis would greatly benefit syllabus planners when preparing the syllabi for the English programmes in Mara Institute of Technology.

A study by Leong (1992) aimed at analysing the oral communication needs of a particular group of ESP learners who were to become future secretaries. The study, through the use of survey questionnaire and structured interview techniques, adopted a broad-based approach that gathered information from three sources: the former students, the user-organizations and the content-area lecturers. The findings of the study clearly indicated that oral communication in English was very important for secretaries in multi-national organizations. It was also implied that students needed to be well-equipped with the relevant job-related oral communication skills before they entered into the job. The information gathered from the former student/ secretary sample concerning the contextual analysis of the target work situation revealed definite patterns of interaction, oral communication events and activities.

Gan Kwa (1996) applied the findings from her studies on the needs of clerks in the banking and finance industry to the English course. She carried out interviews, questionnaire surveys and examined a corpus of authentic written communication by the clerks to other clerks, language lecturers and job trainers in the user-institutions. The findings revealed that the more frequently-performed written tasks were form-filling, facsimile, telegraphic transfer, memorandum, letter, internal report and electronic mail. However, the clerks had problem writing grammatically accurate sentences in their written tasks. The pedagogical implication of this study was that a task-based, learning-centred methodology would be useful in providing the clerks with more practice through approximating in class real-life target writing situations.

Chow's (1996) study was concerned with the language needs of Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia Science Matriculation students, and the general focus of the study was to identify the important English language skills which were relevant to studying Science at the matriculation level. The study suggested that needs analysis should be continuously carried out to identify the needs of Science students, which change dynamically from time to time. Chow contended that needs analysis not only assisted in meeting the specific needs of various Science students, but also helped to increase the effectiveness of a particular English language course.

Most of the studies cited above carried out a Target-Situation Analysis to identify the kinds of skills used in real-life working situations. The researchers applied the findings from the analysis to improve the English course offered to the learners. However in this study, besides the Target-Situation Analysis, the emphasis is also on what Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998) define as *present situation analysis*, which is what the learners already know. This enables the study to discover the lacks between what the learners should know and what they already know. Besides that, strategy analysis is also carried out in this study to identify and specify the use of teaching aids, methods of assessments, types of activities and materials that are preferred by the students and the TPS instructors.

2.11 Conclusion

The major difference that distinguishes an ESP course from the general English course is the needs analysis. An ESP course specifically caters to the learners' needs and, in order to determine the needs, a needs analysis study should be carried out. The

needs analysis can be carried out by following any of the procedures and approaches described above. The data from the needs analysis is then used in designing an ESP course, specifically in formulating the objectives and selecting the syllabus content of the course as well as in evaluating a course.

This study is different than some of the other local studies discussed in this chapter as the studies by Amreet Kaur (1990), Leong (1992) and Gan Kwa (1996) investigated the English language skills and sub-skills needed at the workplace, and the subjects in their studies were employees working in various institutions. However, this study is similar to Chow's (1996) study in terms of the selection of subjects as the subjects were students who had completed their Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia and were in their preparatory English course before enrolling in degree courses.

The present study is carried out with the aim of gaining insights into the students' opinions in relation to their English course and their language needs. The subjects in this study are the students, language instructors and Engineering instructors who are involved in the ESP modules being offered in the institution. This study therefore has similarities to the foreign studies discussed in this chapter that were carried out by Basturkmen and Al-Huneidi (1996), as well as Kriukova and Patyaeva (2002) as the respondents who took part in their studies were also Engineering students and faculty members.